

"I wonder!" breathed the artist to himself.

He wondered if his reluctance to leave this fair sylvan scene and its little queen was born of a deeper feeling than he had suspected. He wondered if in later years, no matter what success came to him, he would not weary of hollow fame and long for the wild free life of this lovely paradise. And then he mentally counted cash and prospects and shook his head slowly and dubiously.

"You're coming, aren't you?" pronounced Rhoda eagerly early the next morning. "See—I've got father's best fishing pole, and he says this is biting day for every fish in the stream. It's down near the Hermitage where the best catches are. You can walk two miles, can't you?"

"Twenty, after that famous breakfast of yours!" asserted Roland.

"And I've put up a fine lunch, and we'll have a fine try for supper," ran on Rhoda.

It was at the end of a two miles' stroll that they came to where the banks of the pretty stream formed a kind of natural wharf.

"Here's where father used to love to fish," explained Rhoda—"in the old days, before his trouble, before Judge Wharton over there turned us away."

She indicated the towers of a mansion lifting from a grove half a mile distant.

"Father was keeper there. The judge and his family were away," narrated Rhoda. "One evening the housekeeper was taken suddenly sick and father ran all the way to the village to fetch a doctor. While he was gone someone broke into the library and stole a lot of the judge's papers and some jewelry and money. They got away across the river in a skiff. When the judge got back he blamed father for disobeying orders and leaving the place unguarded, though the doctor said the housekeeper might have died if he had not come quick. Well, the judge discharged

father from a position he had faithfully filled for over ten years and we were adrift."

"Was much of value taken?"

"The judge says he didn't care for the money and jewelry, but there was a little tin box filled with records and papers of no use to others, but of immense value to him. He has had detectives out and has offered five thousand dollars for the return of the papers, but he has never heard from them."

There was a lapse of silence, for Rhoda had dropped a log to the shore as a seat for Roland and had arranged pole, line and bait with sportsmanlike expertness for her novice guest.

There were nibbles and catches and at the end of two hours the fish basket was pretty well filled. Suddenly, as Roland pulled hard on his line, Rhoda exclaimed:

"Oh, you must have a big one!" and, as the rod bent, amid her excitement she put out her hand to aid him.

"Why, what is it I have fished up, anyway?" queried Roland.

Slowly, attached to the hook, dangling and swaying, a small metal box came into view, the hook looping its wire handle. There it was suspended, swinging shorewards, landed.

"Oh, it's the box!" almost shrieked Rhoda, wild with excitement.

"What box?" asked Roland.

"Oh, I know it is! I've seen it before," fluttered Rhoda. "It's the one that was stolen from the judge, the one I told you about."

"You don't mean the one they offer that big reward for?"

"Yes, I do! See," and Rhoda, detaching the box from the hook, showed where its lock was broken. "The thieves probably saw no value to the papers and dropped the box in the river. Yes, the papers are inside," continued Rhoda, "and oh, Mr. Yorke, just think! you'll get that five thousand dollars reward."

"Why should I?" challenged Ro-